How to / Trackmania / Modifying environments

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Part 3: Working on the "Mood" files

The files in this folder are very important as they can change dramatically the looks of a mod with little work. They determine of how the surrounding "world" looks like...

The Sky

SkyColor.tga (256x256 pixels)
You guessed right, this is the file where you can change the sky's color :P

Yet you have some limitations

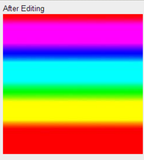
→ The file represents an horizontal stripe of the sky, not all of it.

→ This means that the color at the top and bottom of the image will continue up and down respectively.

→ It's not possible to add stars or other objects, cause the file is infinitely stretched horizontally

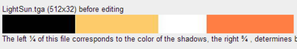
Before editing

After Editing



The Sunlight

LightSun.tga (512x32) before editing

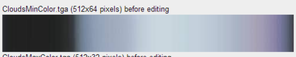


The left ¾ of this file corresponds to the color of the shadows, the right ¼ , determines both the sun, and it's light color.

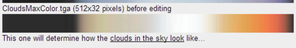
Lightsun.tga after we edited it...

The Clouds Part 1

CloudsMinColor.tga (512x64 pixels) before editing



CloudsMaxColor.tga (512x32 pixels) before editing



This one will determine how the clouds in the sky look like...

Although the original files seam quite complex, there's a simple way of editing them.
First you can reduce their resolution to 32x32.

Then just paint CloudsMaxColor.tga with the color you want for the enlightened part of the clouds and CloudsMinColor.tga with the color for the shadowed part.

That's how our new CloudsMinColor.tga and CloudsMaxColor will look like. Trackmania has no problem accepting smaller textures than the original... But of course you're free to paint the graphics as complex as the originals...

The Clouds Part 2

StadiumFXClouds.dds (512x512 pixels)

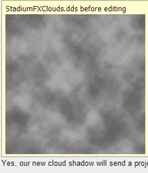
This file is responsible for the clouds shadows projection in all the Stadium and building blocks.

You can use it to project anything you want, making cool new effects like huge flying logos, rainbow color or fog creeping on the floor etc...

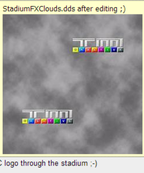
Note that a small object becomes a huge projection, so you can't have much detail.

Save it in DDS format with DXT1 (No Alpha)

StadiumFXClouds.dds before editing



StadiumFXClouds.dds after editing ;)



Yes, our new cloud shadow will send a projection of our MAC logo through the stadium :-)

Reflections

EnvCubic.dds and EnvCubicSpecA.dds (768x128) before we change them ;-)

These files as well as the other Environment files are responsible for the Environment reflections on the reflexive surfaces, like a car's or an inflatable's.

Note that this files consist in 6 square images placed side by side, which are the six faces of a cube, that makes our Environment.

As you can see in the original file, it shows (from left to right) the
Stadium forwards / Stadium backwards / Sky / Floor / Stadium left / Stadium right.

So if have changed one or more of this elements, you may want to change this files accordingly.

Attention! This is a texture for the "Big Boys", because it's a genuine "Cube Map".

If you want to keep it simple, you can also just work on it as a (2D) 256x256 pixel texture, Most programs can only import this sort of DDS texture anyway (Photoshop and Nvdxt can properly import/export Cube Maps).

It has a little drawback, final result is not 100% as detailed as if you handled it with 768x128 pixels, but it will do just fine for most people...

EnvCubic.dds and EnvCubicSpecA.dds (768x128) AFTER we change them :-)

If you can. Save this file(s) as a cube map instead of a 2d texture, in DDS format with DXT5 (Interpolated Alpha).

Part 4: Presentation

There are 2 files important left for identifying and presenting the Mod within TM.

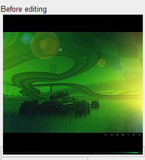
LoadScreen.dds (1024x1024 pixel)

As the name suggests this file defines the screen that shows up, when a track is being loaded, when playing online or lan (not in solo mode).

The file is 1024x1024 pixels, but the visible part of it will be the central 1024x768, so the top and bottom 128 pixels stripe won't appear.

Except for the bottom 32 pixels stripe which corresponds to the loading bar. Also note that in this area the black is set as an invisible/transparent color.

Before editing



CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

After editing

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

Icon.dds (128x128 pixels)

As you may notice, this file is not among the original files.
This is the Icon that appears at the mod selection window in the editor.

Before editing:
Boring standard Icon

After editing:
our new flashy Mania Creative Icon :-)

To make one, just create a new 128x128 image file, make your icon and save it as Icon.dds with DXT1 (No Alpha). It's stored in the root directory of your zip file.

Part 5: Finishing your work

Now that we modified all our files, we can clean up the mess and prepare to use our mod.

1) Delete all files which you did not modify out of yourc:\temp\Image andc:\temp\mood\. After all we don't want to use all the default textures in our Mod but just our modified files...

2) Use your favorite zip application to create an archive from the contents of thec:\temp (not including the folder itself, just all contents within). In case you forgot, check the "Structure of the Zip File". Use standard compression.

3) Put the .zip archive file into your ...My Documents\Trackmania\Skins\[Environment]\Mod\ directory. Restart Trackmania and you're ready to use it. Have fun !

Part 6: Workflow by Firefly

The problem: When you make an environment mod, you can not "reload" the mod in the game, because it uses the cache data until you select a different mod, and then load your own mod again. Since i have seen a lot of people quit and restart the whole game to test their environment mods, here is my little advice that can save you a lot of time.

How to test your environment mods

1. Zip your mod, for example "test1.zip",and copy it into your skins folder ("My Documents/TrackMania United/Skins/Stadium/Mod")
2. Make another copy of that mod in the same folder, and rename it to "test2.zip"
3. Start the game
4. Load your track with the mod "test1"

5. Press ALT+TAB,and make your changes to your mod
6. Zip your mod as "test2.zip", and copy it in your skins folder
7. Switch over to the game with ALT+TAB again
8. Load your track and select the "test2" mod
9. Press ALT+TAB,and make edit your mod again
10. Zip your edited mod as "test1.zip", and copy it in your skins folder
11. Switch over to the game
12. Load your track and select the "test1" mod
13. Repeat at Step5, if necessary

That way you don't have to restart the whole game, and can immediatly see your mod improvements everytime you reload your track.

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